The PULPIT

A Periodical of Contemporary Preaching

MARCH, 1949

Why Church?
By DAVID A. MacLENNAN

Magnificent Reminders
By EDGAR DeWITT JONES

The God Who Answers
By HAROLD E. NICELY

The Triumph of Love
A Lenten Sermon by
EDGAR M. CARLSON

I Choose Christ
By FRANK B. FAGERBURG

I Must
By GEORGE HUMPHRIES TOLLEY

The Minister and Poetry
By THOMAS CURTIS CLARK

The PULPIT

A Periodical of Contemporary Preaching

Charles Clayton Morrison, *Editor*

Entered as second-class matter May 14, 1942, at Post Office at Chicago, Ill., under the act of March 3, 1879. Copyrighted by Christian Century Foundation, 407 S. Dearborn St., Chicago 5. Published monthly, 25 cents a copy. $2.50 a year.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

The Editor's Page....51

Sermons

Why Church? by David A. MacLennan....52

Character, a sermon for youth by J. J. Sessler....54

Magnificent Reminders, by Edgar DeWitt Jones....55

The God Who Answers, by Harold E. Nicely....58

The Triumph of Love, a sermon for Lent by Edgar M. Carlson....60

I Choose Christ, by Frank B. Fagerburg....62

I Must, by George Humphries Tolley....64

Preacher Problems Department

Pastoral Prayer....57

Verse....66

The Minister and Poetry, an article by Thomas C. Clark....68

Sermon Illustrations....69

Thoughts from Unpublished Sermons....71

In the April Pulpit

The April issue of the Pulpit will continue, for the most part, with the Lenten and Easter themes. There will be a sermon by BEN MORRIS RIDPATH of the First Methodist Church of Joplin, Mo., on "Christ in Gethsemane," and one by RAYMOND E. BALCOMB of the Methodist Church in Holbrook, Mass., on "Our Journey to Jerusalem."

There will be two Easter sermons. One of them comes from the study of CHRISTOPHER T. GARRIOTT, minister of the St. Paul Community Church of Homewood, Illinois. This bears the title, "Easter, the Opening of Closed Doors." The other is by H. RICHARD RASMUSSON of the University Church at West Lafayette, Indiana. This excellent sermon deals with the idea of "Eternal Life Now."

Also due to appear in the April Pulpit is a sermon of general interest by CHARLES MERRILL SMITH, minister to students at the Wesley Foundation of Purdue University. This manuscript, which takes the life of Saul for a pattern, deals with the problem of the "crack-up" of personality under strain.

For the preacher problems article a manuscript from the pen of GARY BOUSMAN of the Plymouth Congregational Church of Buffalo, N. Y., has been selected. This article deals with some of the problems of the minister-editor and his parish paper.

Don't miss your April Pulpit!

WHO'S WHO IN THIS ISSUE

REV. DAVID A. MACLENNAN has been minister of Timothy Eaton Memorial Church, Toronto, since 1936. A native of Boston, Mass., he was educated at Manitoba and McGill universities with later study at Harvard. Earlier pastorates were in Hyde Park, Mass., Baltimore, Md., and Montreal (Emmanuel Church).

REV. EDGAR DEWITT JONES was for many years minister of Central Woodward Christian Church, Detroit, Mich. He was president of the Federal Council of Churches 1937-38. Among his many books are *This Great Business of Preaching, American Preachers of Today, A Man Stood Up to Preach* and his recent *Lincoln and the Preachers*. He is now retired and living in Pleasant Ridge, Mich.

REV. HAROLD E. NICELY has been minister of the Brick Presbyterian Church, Rochester, N. Y., since 1938. A graduate of the University of Chicago and Princeton Theological Seminary, he held previous pastorates at Wilmington, Del., and East Orange, N. J.

REV. EDGAR M. CARLSON has been president of Gustavus Adolphus College, St. Peter, Minn., since 1944. Prior to his appointment as head of the college he was professor of Bible and ethics there and, later, assistant professor of church history and English Bible, Augustana Theological Seminary.

REV. FRANK B. FAGERBURG has ministered at the First Baptist Church, Los Angeles, Calif., since 1930. His previous pastorate was in Springfield, Mass. He received his education at Wesleyan University and Newton Theological Seminary. He is the author of *The Sin of Being Ordinary, This Questioning Age* and *Is This Religion?*

REV. GEORGE H. TOLLEY is minister of the First Baptist Church of Jamestown, N. Y. For six years before he decided to enter the ministry he was employed by a banking and brokerage house in New York City. While he was a student at the University of Rochester and Colgate-Rochester Divinity School he was a radio announcer for station WHAM.

THOMAS CURTIS CLARK is widely known for his poems, hymns and anthologies of poetry. He was on the editorial staff of the Christian Century from 1912 until his retirement last summer. He was associate editor of the Pulpit for many years.

REV. J. J. SESSLER is minister of the Third Reformed Church of Holland, Mich.

REV. THORNTON B. PENFIELD, JR., is minister of the First Presbyterian Church, Yonkers, N. Y.

The index for 1948 was inadvertently omitted from the December issue. It will appear in connection with the 1949 index in the issue for next December.

VOLUME XX
NUMBER 3

THE PULPIT

CHICAGO
MARCH, 1949

THE EDITOR'S PAGE

The Event of the Month

THE Congregational National Council, meeting in special session in Cleveland, voted, 787 to 172, to unite with the Evangelical and Reformed Church. The vote was taken under the opposition's threat of a schism in case the merger should be approved, and announcement of the result was received in solemn silence. The E and R synods which had previously approved the merger, are scheduled to vote again, in June, because of certain interpretations added to the Basis of Union by the Congregationalists. Both denominations are now in a different position. The Congregationalists because they may not be able to enter the union as a united body. The E and R's, because their action in June can hardly be taken on the merits alone, but will be clouded by the consciousness that favorable action will involve them as sharers in a possible schism in the other denomination. It is an unfortunate, even a tragic, predicament for both groups. I have no sympathy with the intransigent element on the congregational side. It represents that evil spirit in historical Protestantism which I had hoped this denomination, more than any other, had outgrown. However, both churches are participating in another union undertaking which already includes seven or eight denominations. This most promising movement on the ecumenical horizon was initiated by the Congregationalists. One wonders whether further action on the merger might not wisely be held in abeyance in the hope that the present tensions will be resolved in the process of attaining the more inclusive goal.

An Unfortunate Predicament

The Book of the Month

JUDAISM AND CHRISTIANITY, *by James Parkes. University of Chicago Press. $3.50.*

HAS not the time come for Protestants and Jews to meet one another at a deeper level than that which is provided by the socalled interfaith round tables? The sterility of this procedure is becoming increasingly apparent, and its effects on Protestantism are unwholesome. But Judaism and Protestantism have far more in common than either has with Roman Catholicism. And the possibility of honest conversation between them is intriguingly inviting. This book by a British scholar has kindled my long held hope into a promising conviction. Dr. Parkes tells the story of the relation of Christians and Jews through the centuries, presents a scholarly study of the attitude of Jesus toward his own people, and of the mind of Paul, and penetrates to the core of the differences between the two faiths in the following, to me, illuminating statement: "In Judaism, God says to man: fulfill my plan for creation; and man replies, I will. In Christianity, man returns to God to say: fulfill that part in creation which I cannot because I am foolish and sinful; and God replies, I will." The author disavows any desire to bring the two faiths into union by conversion. But if his irenic spirit and his profound insight into the nature of both religions were generally understood and shared, there is no telling what the Spirit of God might accomplish.

A Thought for the Month

ONE of the most persistent criticisms of us ministers is that we harp too much on one string. I agree with this criticism and sympathize with those patient souls who make it. This certainly is one place at which the minister needs to watch his step. If he calls himself a "liberal" (which I think no parish minister and no church should do) he tends to irritate by persistently sounding the partisan note of liberalism. And where he does not irritate, he narrows the outlook of his people who, proud of their "liberalism," are likely to mistake it for Christianity. If he is social minded he tends to harp on one string of the social gospel by repetitious exhortation to social action, without that subsoil cultivation in the Christian faith from which genuine Christian social action springs. "Our minister can hardly preach without bringing in race relations," said one layman. If he believes profoundly in Christian unity, he may actually harm his cause by riding it too hard. It is bad for a parish minister to get the reputation of being a fanatic. His advocacy of any cause will be far more effective if it emerges as one chord in the rich symphony of the Christian gospel. Again, I believe too much of our preaching is hortatory. People get tired of being told what they *ought* to do. Sermons that are merely moralistic soon exhaust the receptivity of a congregation. People hunger for knowledge that is relevant to the Christian faith—knowledge of the Bible, of the church in its long history and its present situation, and of the movements in current religious thought. They need enlightenment more than exhortation. The preacher who harps on one string will have a short pastorate. Long and fruitful pastorates usually reflect the catholic mindedness of the minister.

Harping on One String

Charles Clayton Morrison

Why Church?

By DAVID A. MacLENNAN

As his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day. Luke 4:16.

WHEN Luke reports that Jesus announced his revolutionary program of the kingdom in his home church at Nazareth, he adds a phrase which tells us much concerning the Master's own attitude toward the church of his day. "*As his custom was,* he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day." The synagogue was Judaism's equivalent of the church. As such it was far from perfect. Jesus broke with many of its teachings, criticized its weaknesses and denounced the hollowness and harshness of some of its leaders. But he believed in it, made participation in its worship and teaching a habit of his life: he went to church on the day dedicated to worship, "as he was accustomed to do." Subsequently the Gospels record his intention to build the church with such spiritual strength that it would be impregnable to the assaults of life-destroying forces. "What did it cost," a friend asked Quinton Hogg, "to build the Polytechnic Institute of London?" "One man's life" was the answer. Building the church was costly, too. One man's life was given that its foundation might be laid secure. Many lives have been given to make the church glorious in witness, service, and holiness.

A RARE HABIT

But of too few in every community can it be said that they go to church "as their custom is." Christlikeness is venerated; belief in God, we are assured by a recent survey, is fairly general. Christian ideals are acknowledged to be the noblest. But as for the church —"Why Church?"—is a familiar response.

Why church? Significant groups in our society put the question contemptuously. There is no reason, they say, unless it is to keep up an old tradition, or on certain high festivals like Christmas and Easter, or at weddings and funerals, to observe social niceties. Marxists give their answer bluntly, savagely; repeating the old parrot-phrases about religion being the opium of the masses, and worship a superstition and escape. The pagan capitalist gives much the same answer—without the same arguments—by his indifference and absenteeism. So-called liberals in religion, the humanists, speak similarly; they talk condescendingly of "church-ianity" versus true Christianity, as if that were a true antithesis. As for many nominal church members, church attendance and support no longer represent a religious obligation. They believe in the church, expect the church to function, and to be there at the same old stand when a crisis occurs in family life. But to destroy any structure you do not need to use dynamite, or hammers and crowbars. Just quit living in it, working on it, maintaining it. The gnawing tooth of time, aided and abetted by termites and rot, will turn a thing of usefulness and beauty into a ruin.

Some one listening to me may be helped by considering the Christian answer to this question, why church? An unpleasant experience in some church long ago may have soured you. You found a prominent church member, or even clergyman, to be a caricature of the creed he professed. You discovered that there were hypocrites in the same pew with you. Of course occasionally there might be one or two in the same row at the theatre, but that is a different matter. Your criticism is a kind of compliment to the institution you have rejected; but you need to review your decision. You don't know what you're missing! And it will not do to say that active participation in a visible, local church doesn't matter so long as through our efforts to lead a good life outside we are members of the Church Invisible. The Church Invisible is a reality, but it includes the church visible, the church militant and imperfect.

Why the Church? Let me try to give you three reasons in the form of three questions: Why comradeship in the service of the best? Why faith? Why worship?

WHY COMRADESHIP?

First, let us face the question: *Why comradeship in the service of the best?* Is it not sufficient that an individual live his own life in such a manner that his own conscience will approve his choices, and his way of living? But choices and a way of living involve relationships with others. Real life is meeting others in various situations. Private integrity is admirable, but as long as we live in a world of persons we cannot live as isolated atoms. We need others. Only the stupid individualist deceives himself with the lie, "I can do without you." We were made for fellowship, and live stunted lives when we cut ourselves off from others. In the service we give to good causes, we are immensely helped as we join others of kindred mind and purpose. As for the highest concern of all, vital religious living, have we realized that there is no such thing as solitary religion in the New Testament? Of course personal commitment to God, personal spiritual disciplines such as prayer and the other practices by which our spirits are strengthened, are basic. Deep truth lies in the comment one thoughtful woman made to another: "Your religion's no good, unless you can take it with two hands." The other agreed and recalled George Macdonald's saying: "Hold fast to God with one hand, and open wide the other to your neighbour. That is religion." Jesus vetoed the religion of the priest and the Levite in his classic story of the good Samaritan. They were religious, but in the Master's eyes, their

religion was a poor thing—it had only one hand. This is where the church comes in. It provides fellowship in the highest aspirations and ministries. It is the school of Christ, and we have fellow-students. It is the army of the Lord, and we have the sustaining help of other soldiers. Strange, isn't it, how we recognize this truth in other areas: we have found that in union there is strength in ranks of labor and management; in education, we prize the fellowship of learning—we have our schools and colleges; in science we have our research foundations and fellows. Yet so often in trying to live the good life, in matters of morality and spiritual experience and method we try to go it alone.

A negro, asked what was wrong with his community, answered, "Well the good ain't able, and the able ain't good." Through the church the good become able, and together find resources to do what none can do adequately alone. Within the fellowship we find support for our noblest hopes. Jesus himself acknowledged this need: to his comrades he said, "Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations." He gave us the secret of finding him when he promised that "where two or three are gathered together" in his name —with his spirit, true to his nature—there he will be in the midst. The church provides a fellowship above all others, transcending all differences of age, color, background—and time itself.

WHY FAITH?

Why church? Its necessity and significance shine with new clarity as we face our second question: *Why faith?*

Of course the church has no monopoly in this matter of offering faith. On all sides there are rival institutions and movements—Marxian communism, secularism, materialism, this cult and that—dealing in the same commodity. But the church has no rival in the field of faith in the Christlike God, and in the supremacy of the Christlike life. Other religions express truth, Christianity *is* religion. That which was discovered partially by the noble founders of great religions has been revealed through Jesus Christ. Why the church? A Scottish journalist made profession of his faith not long since, and was received as a communicant member. He was asked by his startled colleagues why he did so. His answer is worth pondering:

> "It is perhaps sufficient to say that I did not consider this to be a particularly appropriate time to stand on the touch-line and shout advice, far less a time to ignore the entire game. On the whole, I have never much admired people who could not apply headlines in their daily newspapers to their daily lives, and these appear to me to utter every morning a personal challenge to anyone who believes in what we are pleased to call our way of life."

Our way of life is a *faith,* which issues in action. What is this *faith?* That God not only lives, but that he has visited and redeemed his people in the historic person of Christ; that Jesus Christ is the cosmic message, the Divine Word transmitted from the central broadcasting station of the universe; that he is the Word made flesh. Man in his journeyings encounters the divine at many points—in nature, in history, in enlightened conscience, in creative genius, in good men and women. But these are imperfect, uneven "signals" so to speak. In Christ there is the authentic revelation. As we confront the total fact of Christ—his birth, his life, his teaching, his death, and his victory over death and abiding presence through the Spirit—we encounter the living God. We know that as Christ was, so God is eternally. God takes the initiative, answering our need even before we call. He is our creator, and our redeemer.

OUR PRIDE HINDERS

Do we need a redeemer? It is hard for us to admit it. Our pride balks at such an admission of our weakness and inadequacy. But soon or late life makes a breach in our defenses, and we know. Self-sufficiency comes a cropper, and our peace is shattered. We want to be forgiven, restored to the family, and know peace. Then comes "the glorious news of our blessed God." There is forgiveness. There is reconciliation. God in Christ gave himself on Calvary that we might know, that we might find in that divine sacrifice what we could find no where else: the action of God himself to effect our release from the sense of unrelieved guilt, fear, despair. One tells of a man, a skeptic and anarchist who entered a Church in Paris during the singing of Mass. The choir sang as ours does in the service of Holy Communion, "O Lamb of God, who takest away the sin of the world . . . !" Pierced by truth deeper than argument, the man went out into the street exclaiming, "O God! What a dream. If he only could!" But the church declares that he does. The church points to the cross and declares that the heart that forgives the broken-hearted must first be broken. Only out of that brokenness can wholeness come. All that is asked of us is to come, as penitent sinners, to trust that love, accept him, and obey. . . . *This good news comes to you through the church.* Remember that! Before the written gospels, before the New Testament was written the church existed, and the church as custodian of the divine facts provided the gospels and epistles under the inspiration of God's Spirit.

Why faith? Because "only the living flame of faith can scatter the night which has invaded the world without and the heart within." Because faith, the truest interpretation of reality which can be found, keeps life sane, holds it together, makes the weak valiant, and maintains the moral health of the world. We were told that in Buchenwald concentration camp there was a poster prominently displayed which proclaimed: "Here there is no God." They were wrong who said that, for God was there judging the beastly men and women who committed such unspeakable horrors on their fellows. Yet somehow, the person who put it up sensed that when men cease to believe in a God of holy and righteous love and no longer regard their lives as part of the divine drama, life itself degenerates into something foul and intolerable.

"Here there *is* God"—is the proclamation of the church as it points to the world of persons. Here God

discloses himself in human terms, the church affirms as it uplifts Christ.

Why the church? Because within the church lies the truth you and I need to discover, receive, and apply. Because the church is in actuality the body of Christ, that through his grace we become incorporated into his mystical body—with the Spirit of Christ animating us, the will of Christ operating through us, the mind of Christ directing us, the love of Christ sustaining and encompassing us.

WHY WORSHIP?

Why the church? Here is the last question, the answer to which provides cogent reason for it and our part in it. *Why worship?* A short answer is this: "We worship because we cannot help it." If a man will not worship God he will worship something, someone else. A human being must bow down to something. It may be the state, it may be alcohol, power, collectivism, but a god he will have. Many still have the faith of secular humans to which Swinburne gave lyric expression: "Glory to man in the highest for man is the master of things!" Only such worshippers of *homo sapiens* are a little embarrassed when they consider how much man has failed to master—like war, famine, social relations and himself! Why worship? Because we need to get ourselves off our hands. Because we need to find a beam in the darkness; it is so easy to get lost in the world. Because we need constantly to renew our inner life at the source of life; to confess our sorry misdoings and failure to do anything constructive; to be cleansed and renewed. Why worship? Because the end of a week finds us with power cut off, and we need to have the switches thrown in again, so that we can have light and power for the tasks which wait to be done. Through the Word and Sacraments, comfort is found; we are made strong together with God and each other. Why worship? Because we need to be challenged by the call of our Lord to "fight the wrong that needs resistance, to help the cause that needs assistance, to serve the future in the distance."

I do not ask for peace
From life's eternal sorrow;
But give me courage, Lord,
to fight tomorrow.

Why the church? Because to live life well, to have a life that is overflowing with meaning, quiet courage, deep joy, and unfailing usefulness—we need comradeship in the experience and service of the best; we need a faith to live by which furnishes both the reason and the dynamic for great living; we need worship which will re-create us, cleanse and empower us.

Jesus "went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, as his custom was." "Christ loved the church, and gave himself for her . . . in order to bring the church to himself in all her beauty, without a flaw or a wrinkle or anything of the kind, but to be consecrated and faultless."

Character

A Sermon for Young People by J. J. Sessler

CHARACTER is what you are. Nowhere in the Bible do we find the word *character* but it speaks of it on almost every page. Jesus compared a man's character to a house that the wise person builds on solid rock and the foolish person on loose sand. The foundation is that part of the house which is underground and cannot be seen. Two things are necessary for a good building—a solid foundation and sound material to rest on it.

You are building a life like a carpenter builds a house. The carpenter has a plan according to which he builds. He does not start by nailing boards together. The architect makes the plans, and then the carpenter builds the house just like the plans, step by step. God is the architect of your life, but you are the builder. According to what plan does God, the architect want you to build? The plan for your life is to be found in the Bible. God has given you more than a plan; he has even given you a model. The model is Jesus Christ. Build your life like the life of Jesus. Study God's plan for you in the Bible and build your life accordingly. Be certain to look at the model, Jesus, often to see if you are building your life like his. That is the way to build Christian character.

Every person builds his own character. A well built house does not get there by itself, and a strong and beautiful character will not come by chance or accident. It is something you create. Do not say it was bad luck if your character is weak, and do not say it was good luck if your character is strong. Luck plays no part in the building of your character. You are responsible for what you are. The kind of person you will be, does not "just happen."

A good house can only be made out of good materials. It takes many kinds of materials for a house,—wood, stone, iron, brick, plaster, and paint. I read of a man who collected two hundred and fifty kinds of wood from many countries, from which he made a desk in which he used fifty thousand pieces. It took him thirty years to build this desk. Neither is a house built in a few days.

BUILDING TAKES TIME

The building of character takes a lifetime. You will have to be working at it as long as you live. What are the materials that you are putting into it? Character is not built with wood, stone, and plaster, but with faith, hope, love, kindness, generosity, courage, honesty, truth and beauty. You build your character with the thoughts you think, the books you read and the friends with whom you associate. These are the materials for your character, but you must choose them. Many small things

go into the making of your character. Some one, perhaps, showed you a little kindness or gave you a loving smile. What did you do with them? Did you use them to build your character? If it is good and lovely, there is nothing so small that you cannot use to build a fine character, A latch is small but not too small for a house, a blade of grass is not too small to be a part of the lawn. Use all the good, the beautiful and the sacred, however great or small to build Christian character. God has the plan for your character, but you must choose the materials that are to go into it.

There is a Chinese legend which tells of an old man who taught great truths to the people of his village. Some listened to him eagerly while others made fun of him. One day some boys who had caught a small bird decided to play a trick on the old man. One of them keeping the bird covered up in his hands, said: "We know that you are a very wise man and we are coming to you with this opportunity to prove it to others in our village. In my hand is a bird. Tell me, is it dead or alive?" If the old man said, "Dead," the boy would have opened his hand and let the bird fly away. If he said, "Alive," the boy would have crushed the bird in his hands and then shown that it was dead. But the old man's reply was different from what the boys expected. He looked into their eyes and said, "It is as you will."

Indeed, the bird in the boy's hand would be dead or alive as he willed it. So it is with your character. It will be what you will it to be. God has the plan for your character, he is the architect and he will help you build it. But it will be what you make it.

Magnificent Reminders

By EDGAR DeWITT JONES

Joshua 4:19-24.

THERE is in this vivid Old Testament narrative a sorry commentary on a human frailty—our proneness to forget what we ought to remember. How could the children of Israel ever forget their passing through the river Jordan "as by dry land?" But they did!

How could these children of bondage when freed from shackles forget the manner of their deliverance or the beneficence of the deliverer? But they did! How can an enlightened people forget Jesus Christ, his coming to redeem humanity, and the sacrifice he made upon the Cross? But they do!

Monuments, memorials, shrines, anniversaries, celebrations—all have their warrant in the melancholy fact that we are a forgetful people. Some of these memorials may be fittingly described as "magnificent reminders."

SOME NATIONAL REMINDERS

In Washington, there are magnificent reminders of two men whom it seemed the Lord raised up to match the hour and the event. One of these is a tall plain shaft 555 feet in height, sacred to the memory of him of whom it was said he was "first in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen." The second magnificent reminder is at the west end of the mall, where stands a white marble temple. Inside is the statue by French of a brooding figure sitting at ease in the great chair. This is the memorial to the man who preserved the Union, and of whom it was said, "His is the gentlest memory of our world."

There is a third magnificent reminder in the recumbent statue of General Robert E. Lee, at Lexington, Virginia. That statue, the work of the sculptor Valentine, who put his best into the reclining figure, is the magnificent reminder of a very great gentleman who was never greater than in defeat which he translated into a victory in moral grandeur.

THE SABBATH DAY

The eternal God has seen fit to give us certain magnificent reminders that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them who seek him. One of these is *The ancient Jewish Sabbath and the Christian Sunday.*

It is doubtful if Judaism could have survived had it not been for the Sabbath institution and celebration. The Sabbath holds a place of vast importance in the Bible. The commandment to keep the Sabbath day holy is the fourth in the decalogue. Jerusalem fell in 586 B. C. The temple was destroyed and the people taken into Babylon as captives. Those were dark days, and it seemed as though the candle of the Jewish people was extinguished. But there went with the captives the prophet Ezekiel, and he made the observance of the Sabbath of primary importance. Once a week these captive people stood up to be counted. It was their holy day and they kept it in solemn celebration with prayer and praise. No matter that all around them the practices of Babylon prevailed; no matter whether there were taunts and ridicule from their captors; these exiled Jews kept the Sabbath day, and the Sabbath day kept them.

The best days of our own nation are those when we keep the Christian Lord's Day in a reverent and becoming manner. In days gone by some of us can remember a serenity and peace which seemed to fall over the land when the Lord's Day dawned.

It is a sad mistake to think we have outgrown this day, or could do so, this magnificent reminder that

God is and that he is the rewarder of them who seek him. Is it not true that even those who feel themselves to have outgrown institutional religion would not wish to live in a land where every day was like every other day? A land where there were no religious services, no day of physical and mental rest, no day designed to quicken the spiritual nature? If this day were to go out of existence, something would go out of our lives, something fine and noble perish from the earth.

The early Christians replaced the Jewish Sabbath, which was the seventh day, with the Christian's First Day of the Week, a standing memorial to the gospel of the empty tomb and of him who ever liveth to intercede. In our eagerness to emphasize the resurrection and eternal life on Easter we have forgotten that every Lord's Day, is a memorial, an anniversary of that stupendous event. Every Sunday it is fitting to sing, "He is risen, He is risen, Tell it out with joyful voice." When John the beloved disciple was exiled to the Isle of Patmos, he remembered this day of days and wrote down for millions who should come after him to read that he was "in the Spirit on the Lord's Day." That is a fine phrase. He must have meant that he was sensitive to spiritual impulses, his thoughts purified and exalted, passions subdued, purposes ennobled, his vision enlarged and sharpened, his heart warmed, his whole being suffused and energized with the Spirit of God. The Lord's Day can do the same for every worshipping soul.

Once a week God gives us this magnificent reminder of his unspeakable Gift to the world. To be "in the Spirit" on the Lord's Day should mean that the other days of the week will be used wisely, helpfully, and not only to one's self, but to fellow pilgrims along the way. A magnificent reminder is the Lord's Day, a red-letter day in the calendar of the disciple of Christ.

> Yes, child of suffering, thou mayest well be sure,
> He who ordained the Sabbath loved the poor.

THE CHURCH OF OUR FAITH

Another magnificent reminder that God is and that he is a rewarder of those who seek him is the synagogue of the Jews and the church of our Christian faith.

Of the Jewish institution of worship I speak only a passing word, but it should help us to remember that in Babylonian exile when the Sabbath was reinstated the synagogue came into existence, the replica of the great Temple that stood in Jerusalem, dear to the heart of every zealous Jew. These magnificent reminders go together more closely than we think—the Sabbath and the synagogue, Sunday or the Lord's Day and the church of the Christ, "ground and pillar of the truth." The church is a standing monument, a constant reminder of God, of Christ, of the life of the Spirit, of prayer as a life force, and of immortality.

I would have you know that when I speak of the church I am not referring solely to this church nor to the churches down or up the street, but to all the churches which compose the Church universal—churches of every description, little and great, rural and urban, rich and poor, the churches in this and every land! For the Church is greater than the churches. It can be said that the churches are but broken lights of the Church. Yet all of these churches, congregations, chapels, meetinghouses, are institutions of the Christian faith—magnificent reminders, I repeat, that God is and that he is a rewarder of them who seek him.

The question is sometimes asked why don't more people go to church? The more pertinent question is why do so many people go to church? There are many other places to go that may be more entertaining, and where one feels freer to do as he pleases. It isn't always easy to leave a comfortable house on a cold or rainswept day to go to a church perhaps miles distant. Yet, all over this land and other lands people continue to go to church, in season and out of season. The surprising thing is not that public worship seems to be dying out, but that it is living, and often with a zestfulness that is good to feel.

CHURCHES DIE HARD

We speak of churches dying. Sometimes they do die, but not without a struggle; usually they die hard. It's not easy to kill a church. It seems to have many lives. Why is this true? It is because the Church is greater than the churches. It is because people are reluctant to give up wholly the house of God where they have sensed the presence of the eternal. It is because something in us rebels at the thought. It has been well said that even those who never darken a church door do not want to see the doors closed. Most of the people have no wish to live in a land where churches are not and public worship has ceased to be. Here, too, is something to ponder: nearly everybody desires a Christian marriage ceremony for his children, and the offices of the church and Christian burial for himself and for those whom he loves. Why is this the case? It must be because even those who sense it dimly are yet aware of a certain magnificence in the church as a reminder of what Matthew Arnold called "a power not of ourselves that makes for righteousness,"—a symbol of the Most High, a house of the Eternal!

There are two ordinances, according to the New Testament, sometimes called "sacraments"—baptism and The Lord's Supper. There is a far-reaching significance to these ordinances. They are not merely rites, not solely ceremonies. Christian baptism is a dramatic reminder; the outward sign of an inward grace. In Romans, the sixth chapter, we read in the third and fourth verses, "For are ye ignorant that all we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him through baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life." A baptism, when it is administered with dignity and solemnity, is an impressive ceremony. It is pictorial, dramatic. It represents death, burial and resurrection. It is solemn, beautiful, helpful.

The second ordinance is the memorial feast, the Holy Communion, or, as it is called in the New Testament, The Lord's Supper. It is a love-drenched reminder that God is not willing that any shall perish

but all find new life in his Son, and that abundantly. An eminent Christian leader has said that the reunion of the divided church will come at the table of the Lord, where the loaf and the cup, the bread and the wine, remind us so ineffably of that badge of discipleship by which all men shall know that we are Christ's disciples. The Catholic Church puts the Mass at the center of worship, and the Mass has at its base the simple observance traced in the gospel record. The Greek Church does the same with even more elaborate ceremonies. The Lutherans and the Episcopalians put the Eucharist, which is but another name for The Lord's Supper, into the center of their worship. For there is something in this ordinance which gets at the heart of the gospel. Surely The Lord's Supper is a magnificent reminder that God is; that Jesus Christ is; that prayer is potent; that love is dynamic; that faith is the victory!

These two ordinances are part and parcel of the church. Not for one moment do I believe that these ordinances can of themselves be substituted for the kind of life which they symbolize, but they have their place and power and authority. It is best to use them discerningly, reverently, and pass on to the noble way of life they symbolize—"That life, which is life indeed."

THE CHURCH'S CONCERN IS GOD

We sometimes speak of the church as demanding this or that of us. It is just as true, and in a sense truer, that something within us, deep down, demands the church do something for us, yearns for the church, is not satisfied short of the church. We are so forgetful. We need to be reminded what we were, and are, and what we may yet become! It is wrong to belittle church attendance; wrong to say one can worship anywhere. It isn't quite true that one may worship God in his great out-of-doors, on the mountainside or beside the sea, just as helpfully as he can worship God within four walls of a building. Such a one may find much to praise God for as he gazes upon his handiwork, and that is good. But there is no adequate substitute for public worship. The church, and only the church, provides such a place. It puts us in remembrance of some things that no gathering of a purely secular nature can do. The church's primary concern is with God and man, the forgiveness of sin, the new life of the Spirit, the Christlikeness of the forgiving spirit, and the sharing of one's life with the Eternal and with his children. What other institution does this? Not one!

Sometimes a man or woman is heard to say, "What do I get out of the church?" The answer is, "How much do you give? How much do you put in? Not only of what you have but what you are?" So much depends on what we bring to the church and public worship, in spirit and in mind and heart. What we take away depends so largely on what we bring to the church—attitude of mind, receptivity of spirit, eloquent listening, willingness to learn, and share, disposition to aspire. Magnificent reminders—yes, but how do we treat them?

Dr. Fosdick holds that the next great conflict will be between Christianity and communism. He may be correct in this, since the two systems are in conflict in both belief and practice. They have some things in common. Both are international in scope, and both profess to believe in the brotherhood of man, although they differ in the method of its realization. Christianity believes in the priority of the spiritual; communism in the priority of the economic or materialistic. If Christianity is to win a moral victory over communism, our Christianity will have to be more enthusiastic, more zealous, more generous, more aggressive than it now is; and we must also have unity of purpose and of spirit. Russian Communists have what they would call a magnificent reminder in the memory of Lenin, their illustrious leader. His lifeless body is carefully guarded at Moscow, and is a shrine to which the Russians repair from time to time for rededication to their plans and program.

LOYALTY TO OUR REMINDERS

Our magnificent reminder is the spiritual body of Christ, his living church. What homage do we pay to Christ's memory, the incomparable saga of his earthly life, the victories of the risen Christ? I submit if we treat the magnificent reminders God has given us—the Lord's Day and the church, with anything short of the loyalty and devotion that communists give to their ideals, principles and objectives, they will outstrip us in their economic missionary zeal, passion and spirit of sacrifice for their political system.

I return to these magnificent reminders. They were given us for a purpose. We have not heeded the lesson they teach save in part and at times. Let us honestly confess that we have dealt shabbily with these magnificent reminders here to inspire and strengthen us. Imagine what we would be without them. What would our state be, and also our fate? It is not numbers that we lack, rather we lack the spirit, the purpose, the grace, the power, the penitence. Things are going badly with our old world. Not in any period of history of which we have any record was there such a dire need for spiritual renewal. We need the Lord's Day and the church—magnificent reminders these!

A Prayer for Ministers

By REV. THORNTON B. PENFIELD, Jr.

O LOVING FATHER who hast called us, as Jesus called his Disciples, to Thy ministry, because we care deeply, make us better ministers and leaders. Because we want so much to give love, make us worthy of love. Because we want so much to help, give us the core of inner integrity without which no help can be given or received.

Give us understanding and courtesy. Help us to listen attentively even when we are tired or the bulletin must be prepared. Teach us to think, not in terms of sermons or programs, but as Jesus did in terms of

people. Let not too much church work or too much cloistered study choke the tender plant of our love for people or our intimate fellowship with Thee. For our ministry is nothing we fashion—but something we permit Thee to do through us.

Save us from professionalism, stereotyped kindness, the fixed smile with thoughts elsewhere. Save us from using our position or theological language to bolster up a point which will not stand on its own merits.

Give us reality and frankness to make possible mutuality and rapport. Give us memory to humble us, and to recreate the dreams at our ordination and the goals we set for ourselves. Grant us to preach by our lives; and let the glow of Thy spirit be reflected in what we are.

Teach us that any call to any field is a permanent call, till Thy voice shall change it. Save us from restiveness. Show us that we are needed right where we are. Center our thoughts not on the limitations of our work, but on the opportunities of our work.

Give us the directness, the hopefulness of children. Captivate us, as young people are captivated, by the winsomeness and the eternal challenge of Jesus. May we grow as they grow. And may time bind our people more deeply to us and to Thee our God.

And when having done all we seem to have failed, in the name of him who was made perfect through suffering we ask that we may look up unashamed and hear Thy voice say: "My grace is sufficient for thee." Amen.

The God Who Answers

By HAROLD E. NICELY

And call ye on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the Lord: and the God that answereth by fire, let him be God. And all the people answered and said, It is well spoken. I Kings 18:24.

IN troubled times, when distress and anxiety are widespread, people look for a scapegoat. and someone is blamed whether he deserves it or not. There had been a long drought in the land of Israel in the days of Elijah. The brooks dried up one by one, and the grain withered before it was ripe. Day after day the sun shone balefully in a cloudless sky, and what was at first disappointment turned to general alarm.

In the eyes of many, Elijah was the troublemaker. He had spoken plainly and often against the intrigues and cruelties of Ahab and Jezebel, and especially their strange innovations in morality and religion, which according to Elijah amounted to repudiation of the living God. So it was quite natural, when times were bad, to point the finger at Elijah as the troubler of Israel's peace. And it was inevitable that he should retort that the real source of the general distress was the social and religious decay which centered in the worship of Baal, which was the more reprehensible because it was endorsed by the king.

THE TEST IS ARRANGED

The issue had to be settled, and Elijah proposed a test. Altars were to be built on the top of Mt. Carmel, one for Baal and one for Jehovah. A bullock was to be placed on each altar, and prayers were to be said. The entire ritual was to be carried out by the priests except for lighting the fire. It was left for the true God to accomplish this wonder, and it was agreed that "the god that answereth by fire, let him be God."

You remember how the story continues. Early in the morning throngs of people began climbing Mt. Carmel to witness the demonstration. There were four hundred and fifty priests of Baal on hand to do their part. They placed their sacrifice on the altar and began to pray. "O Baal, hear us. O Baal, hear us." They ran and leaped and danced about the altar, but nothing happened. When the day was half gone they became more excited, and in their frenzy even cut themselves with knives, but although the sun made the stones of the altar very hot, there was no fire.

Finally, when the sun was dipping toward the western sea, there were calls for Elijah. The crowd wanted to see what he could do. So the altar was prepared and a bullock placed upon it, and it was drenched with water that even filled a trench around the altar. And Elijah knelt and prayed, "Hear me, O Lord, that this people may know that thou art God." And the fire descended and consumed the sacrifice, and all the people fell on their faces and cried out, "The Lord, he is God. The Lord, he is God."

THE DEMONSTRATION TODAY

"The god that answereth by fire, let him be God." Such a demonstration would prove nothing today. Even if a man could do what Elijah did it would not persuade the mind or convert the soul. A sword-swallower or a fire-eater does not thereby give evidence of his intimate relations with God, for the persuasion that God is God rests on other grounds. We worship only what we adore and respect. We worship only what we know to be just and holy. We worship only the God whose attributes correspond to our highest thoughts and our deepest needs. We worship only the God who answers with what we believe to be divine fire. The god who answers with such fire, let him be God.

Although we are not always aware of it, there is such a demonstration going on today, not on Mt. Carmel, but in industry and politics, in home and office, in city and countryside, and if we have eyes to see, there is a God who answers by fire. Amid all that is false and

vain he asserts his deep and satisfying truth. Amid all that is changing, he makes plain his steady purpose. Amid all that is shallow, cruel and ugly, he reveals the splendor of his just and righteous ways.

It would appear that in Elijah's time, a god who could light a fire must be the living God. But if we look more deeply into human experience in our time, and even before Elijah's time, we would say, a God who is humane must be the living God. I did not say *human*—a god with all the jealousies, desires and passions of our mortal nature only slightly refined—such were the gods of Mt. Olympus, and because they were human, an enlightened conscience rejected them, for they were powerless to light the altar with divine fire. But *humane*—merciful, compassionate, tenderhearted, forgiving, always watching by day and night, and always caring, as a good shepherd cares for his sheep—such is the living God.

If we look more deeply into human experience even before Elijah's time, we find intimations of a humane god. It is easy to read the Old Testament carelessly and find a God of battles and of vengeance, a tribal God, on the side of his people, because they were his people, and against the alien and the barbarian because they were not his people. Whatever one may say of the merits of Zionism, the case must be settled apart from any recourse to a God who has special favors for a special people. It must be settled in the name of the God of all the ends of the earth, whose universal justice it was the genius of Israel first to discover and proclaim.

THE CREATURE IS PRECIOUS

As early as the opening chapters of Genesis we have glimpses of this humane God. When the first awful crime was committed, and a man had taken his brother's life, there was no escape from the consequences of his act, for he was face to face with God and with God's question, "Where is thy brother Abel?" This was one of the first assertions of the moral structure of the universe.

When Abraham was exposed to the religion of the Canaanites, who practiced human sacrifice, he must have been impressed by their capacity for devotion, and he was doubtless chided by them, that he showed no comparable zeal for his God, and at last, believing that something more should be done to prove his self-renunciation, he took his dearly loved son Isaac to an altar, and was prepared to offer him to God. But the humane God intervened, and an angel appeared and said, "Lay not thine hand upon the child." Of this there is an echo in Hosea, "For I desired mercy and not sacrifice."

It was beginning to dawn in human minds that the creature was very precious to the Creator; that it was not by chance that man was fashioned; nor to be the victim of some dark and senseless fate; nor a mere pawn in the game that the gods played for their own pleasure. Rather, he was fashioned to become a child of God, and to fulfill the purposes which a divine wisdom and a divine mercy had conceived.

Because such a God corresponds to man's highest thoughts and deepest needs, he will gain the verdict, not by a light that blinds the eye, nor by a rod of iron that rules the will, but by the gentle pleading of a voice and the quiet persuasion of a truth, as men move slowly through the ages in their journey toward the light. Such is the divine fire which he kindles on the altars of the heart.

By this God the customs and institutions of our world will be judged. Even the churches, and the organized expressions of faith and worship, well-established and amply endowed, will be living altars only as they burn with such fire.

There is much that is just and beneficent in the Roman Catholic Church. But when the Vatican issues a statement that Princess Anne who married Michael of Rumania in the ceremony of the Greek Orthodox Church, is living in grave sin which can be expunged only by a return to the Roman Catholic Church and the agreement to bring up her children in that faith, or by death, we see the cold hand of an ecclesiastical medievalism, which was so far from the hand of Christ that a Protestant Church was compelled to exist if men were to be true to their own consciences and to the gospel as they read it with open minds.

GOD MUST BE FIRST

There is a sense in which the Princess is living in sin,—the same sense in which you and I are living in sin, for we have all sinned and come short of the glory of God. And it would be good for the Vatican, as it is for you and me, to say with the publican, "God be merciful to me a sinner," and always to remember that whoever excludes a sincere Christian from the Kingdom of God surely excludes himself, and the altar is cold, for the divine fire is out.

As citizens of a state which justly imposes serious responsibilities upon us, even as it grants great liberties, we have political interests, and probably political attachments. But as Christians we are always to bring our local and party loyalties under the judgment of God, for the first commandment is, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." To say, "My party, right or wrong," is to break the first commandment, for it is to put the party in the place of God. Therefore, a good Republican or Democrat or Socialist can only be a good Christian if he follows the party insofar as he maintains his commitment to the will of God.

There is room for differences of method. Politics is the science of the possible, and morality is concerned with what ought to be, and the problem is to bring the possible and the ideal together. There will always be differences as to where the best course lies, which is realistic and possible, and which opens the door effectively to better courses that lie ahead. But anyone would have to stretch his conscience to the point of pure hypocrisy to believe that any party was always right on every issue.

A humane God created the good earth as a dwelling place for man, and in the fullness of time brought man forth to inherit the earth, to toil and love and serve, and to fashion the noble works of truth and beauty, and to crown all his achievements with goodness. Surely this humane God will be far removed from those who abandon the clearance of slums, the housing of the

poor, and the employment of the simple, no matter how many invocations or benedictions are said by the chaplain to give grace to their assemblies.

The Constitution was interpreted largely in terms of property and free enterprise in the early years when there was little awareness of the denial of civil rights, and little concern for public welfare. In the wide open spaces there was always room for a man to make a new start. But if the God who lights the fires of the future is a humane God, he will bless the employer that does not discriminate on any grounds except merit, and the city that does not segregate, and the community that has a conscience for the last and the least of God's children. For this God alone corresponds to the highest thoughts and deepest needs of humanity today.

KNOWN BY THEIR FACES

Dean Russell of Columbia University once told of a trip to the Pyrenees where the travellers encountered the ways of the simple mountain shepherds. He found one who was bringing his sheep through the gate at night into the fold, and he was guiding them with his staff, and calling them by name. "How can you tell their names, when they all look alike?" asked Mr. Russell. "The same way you do people," said the shepherd, "by their faces." He had lived with them long enough, and looked at them carefully enough, to know them by name.

There are some places in the world where sheep have no names, where an injured sheep would be destroyed. There are some places in the world where men are conscripted for industry or war, where the secret police are spying, where elections are a mockery, where human beings are pawns of the state. There are other places where people have names, where the strong help the weak, where the sick are healed, and the hungry are fed, where friends are near to do all they can to help.

This is the real struggle of our age. It is the struggle of every age. There is no question of where God stands, for Jesus is the revealer of the Good Shepherd, who calls his sheep by name, who gently holds the broken in body or spirit in his strong arms of love.

From sunrise 'til sunset, from today until doomsday, the priests of any other religion will call on the name of their god in vain. But call on the name of the humane God, and see how the divine fire burns on the altars of church and community and state. Hear the people with one glad voice exclaiming, "The Lord, he is God. The Lord, he is God." The God who answers with that fire, let him be God.

The Triumph of Love

A sermon for Lent by Edgar M. Carlson

Who his own self bare our sins in his body upon the tree, that we, having died unto sins, might live unto righteousness; by whose stripes ye were healed. I Peter 2:24.

LESLIE WEATHERHEAD tells of passing the volcanic island of Stromboli in the Mediterranean one night at sunset as the crater at its summit cast forth tons of molten lava in one of its periodic eruptions. As they sailed on into the night the sides of the crater seemed to become aglow with fire as the lava traced its way toward the sea. As they looked back upon it, it looked for all the world, he says, like "a deep gash in the heart of night." There is a gash like that at the heart of human history, made out of the erupting streams of God's holy love against the night of human sin. It is not merely something which history records and the record displays, somewhat as an old soldier displays the scars which testify to conflict and danger in the past. It moves in upon us as a contemporary fact, so that we, too, stand in its presence; we cannot escape him who is "the Wounded Greatness of the world."

Not at least in the holy Lenten season! We walk the road to Jerusalem and Calvary again, and there it stands—the shadow of the Cross, in our time and in our lives. To lead men to it and to seek to understand its meaning is the preacher's task. To proclaim the gospel is to proclaim the meaning of that gash and that cross at the heart of history.

A DEATH STRUGGLE

No matter where one dips into the gospel story he becomes immediately conscious, if he reads with discernment, that he is witnessing a struggle to the death between the forces of good and the forces of evil; or, to speak in specifically religious terms, between God and the devil. The nature of the conflict may be stated in terms of a contest between power and love; or, more exactly between the love of power and the power of love. At least so the alternatives seem to have presented themselves to the mind of Jesus. The typical Jewish conception of the Messiah pictured him as a perfectly good and a perfectly powerful king. From the beginning of his ministry, Jesus seems to have realized that such a union was not possible. It was the issue which he faced in the wilderness temptations. Should he seek to conquer by that sort of power which manifested itself in turning stones into bread, by dazzling people into allegiance with miracles of power, by falling in line with the nationalistic Zealots and establishing a king-

dom which could subdue its rivals, or by pure love? When he came out of the wilderness "in the power of the spirit," it was with the conviction that love was the way. Any suggestion to desert it, even though it came from the lips of a friend, he took as an attempt to entice him from God and enlist him on the side of the devil.

One sees the conflict in its most intense form in the garden of Gethsemane. It was not now a choice between two alternative courses of action, either of which had a chance of success in the sense that it might command a decisive following. The issue was now between love that would die and power that would destroy. Had the time come for judgment? Had love reached the limit beyond which it could not go? You remember that when they arrested him, he said, he could call "twelve legions of angels." Had that been what the struggle was about? Must he not now heed the counsel of the "Sons of thunder" to call down fire from heaven, which he had earlier rejected?

Could love take even this wound, this open assault on the part of men? Even when men were doing their worst to him, ought he still to be doing his best for men? How boundless was the love of God? Could sin be allowed to destroy the sinless One?

If that was the issue, the issue was settled once and for all when he came out of Gethsemane and went to the Cross. God's love knows no bounds; there are no limits to it. God's offer of fellowship with sinful men, through Jesus Christ, remains. The word of forgiveness could be spoken from a Cross. There isn't anything that men can do to God which they did not do to him when they ousted the strong Son of God from human fellowship even though they had to commit history's consummate crime to achieve it. Not figuratively but literally, he "bore our sins in his body on the tree." He allowed sin to do to him what it should have done to the evil-doer.

There is something absolute about all this. It is not just another event in history; it is history's decisive event. There is an absolute disclosure of man in it. Once all that was good and true and holy came into the world and men declared that it was not fit to exist among them. Once God came incarnate into the human family, men who had been created in his image could not tolerate his presence, so far had they departed from the image in which they were created. Once there was a living offer of fellowship with God and men would have none of it. Here is the absolute denial of all our pretensions to human goodness.

GOD HAS BEEN HERE

There is an absolute disclosure of God in it. No longer need men speculate about him in dark mysteries of their own imaginings. God has been here. His footprints are on the sands of time. He who out of love created us for blessing, who has wooed us through all time, has in "the fullness of time" become one with us in Jesus Christ to reconcile the world unto himself. That offer may be rejected and despised but still it is offered. Neglect and indifference may turn to bitter hatred and cruel murder but still it is offered. When the evidence against man is all in, when five scars bear eternal witness against us, the offer is not withdrawn. When he rises again on the third day and sends forth his disciples, it is to preach the same gospel, "the remission of sins." That is the unbelievable glory of the Easter message. God is so completely love that not even the experience of the Cross will turn him against us. We may be able to make our children stop loving us; the affections of husband and wife may turn to ashes; even a father and mother may forsake us, but we can never make God stop loving us. He gives himself to men and for men at the moment of their greatest guilt. When they were most completely in the employ of the devil, God in Jesus Christ was bearing the shame, the humiliation, the penalty even, which their sin was bringing into the world.

LOVE HAS GONE THE LIMIT

Something happened in that event on Calvary which can neither be repeated or surpassed. It was not just another instance of an eternal principle. There have been noble acts of sacrifice before and since, but this is not just another act of sacrificial love. It has happened that a man has laid down his life for a fellow man, but this was the Creator laying down his life for the creature. The whole meaning of the Cross for Christian faith, as the New Testament understands it, hinges upon the fact that God was in Jesus Christ. The attitude and action of Jesus in that crisis hour when incarnate Goodness confronted sin and evil in all its hideousness and guilt is the attitude and action of God. The uniqueness of the event derives from the uniqueness of Jesus Christ. It cannot be repeated unless it is repeated by him. And in the very nature of the case such a repetition becomes inconceivable for there was something ultimate in what happened.

There is nothing that God can do for men which was not done for them before. Love has gone the limit now, for it has revealed itself to be infinite. It is vain and futile, blasphemous even, to speak of any further revelation of God or of his love.

Because the death of Christ is the ultimate deed of God's love it is eternal and contemporary. He who "bore our sins in his body on the tree" bears them still. If history's greatest crime, enacted by sinful selfish men, could not turn God against them, our sin will not turn him against us. If love triumphed over evil then, it may do so now. The "word of the Cross is the power of God" still, "to everyone that believeth." If one is to be lost he must be lost against a love like that, but not even a love like that can save a man who rejects it. If we insist on aligning ourselves with the forces of evil, rebels against God, the Cross is the sure sign of our defeat, for it is the sign of the victory of God's love.

We stand again this Lenten season in the presence of the Cross. The conflict out of which it issued is still being waged in the world; the conflict between good and evil, between God and the devil. Not only in the world, but, above all, in us. The issue has been decided. God's love is sovereign. When evil has done its worst, his love remains. What shall we say about it all?

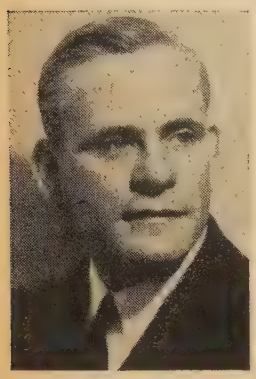
Love so amazing, so divine
Demands my soul, my life, my all.

I Choose Christ

By FRANK B. FAGERBURG

Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we have believed and know that thou art the Holy One of God. John 6:68,69.

FIRST, I choose Christ because I am a sinner and I need a Savior. I understand quite well that the word sinner is no longer popular. A false sense of superiority has led men and women to drop the word sin from their vocabulary or to find other words to take its place.



A writer in *Collier's Weekly* a few years ago put it this way: "People are having their misgivings as to what a popular philosophy is saying on the subject of sin: that if a man sins today it is largely a matter of temperament. He sins because his grandfather was a sinner, or he sins because he lives on the wrong street corner. Now, that ought to comfort a man, but somehow it does not; and it ought to take the ache out of his heart, but instead, it leaves it there. It leaves him with the blight of sin on his soul, and it leaves him with a heart that is ashamed. So men are beginning to turn back to the old Book because it does not say any cheap and easy words about it at all when it talks about sin, but tells a man before it gets through talking about sin that here is a God with whom there is forgiveness, who speaks to him the words, 'Go and sin no more.'"

MAN MUST ADMIT HIS NEED

The doctor can do nothing for a man who will not recognize and admit his need. No matter what he calls his illness, there it is. No matter what you call your sin there it is. In a hundred ways I have in thought, word and deed offended against my fellow men and against God. In a thousand more ways I have by omission done wrong.

Guilt is a heavy burden. It is a crushing, maddening burden. Through the centuries people have done anything, everything to get relief through the assurance that relationship to God has been restored. A hundred million altars, a billion sacrificed animals bear witness to man's sense of need.

Nineteen hundred years ago came one who said he could show sinners the way to God's love and forgiveness. In him, in his life, death and resurrection, the altars and sacrifices found final answer. The writer of Hebrews put it: "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him." Paul said: "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself"; and again he testified, "He is our peace." John Bunyan has Pilgrim drop his heavy burden when he comes to the cross. What Pilgrim did in the famous story millions have done in actual life.

Upon that cross of Jesus
Mine eye at times can see
The very dying form of One
Who suffered there for me;
And from my stricken heart with tears
Two wonders I confess:
The wonders of redeeming love
And my unworthiness.

Second, I choose Christ because I am weak and need strength. Forgiveness, a new start—they are not enough. I need reinforcement every day and every moment. What man or woman, even after commitment to Christ, is not amazed and ashamed of the potential wickedness in his mind and heart? Of even Jesus' temptation experience the record at its close says of the tempter: "And . . . he departed from him for a season." The apostle Paul, humiliated by the pull and push of good and evil within, said: "When I would do good, evil is present with me . . . O wretched man that I am!"; but again: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

WE NEED CHRIST

I humbly confess that I cannot face each day's recurring down-drag in my own strength. What a fool is any mere man who in proud confidence imagines that he can! The hymn writer has said it for me:

I need thee every hour,
Most gracious Lord.
. . . . . .
I need thee every hour;
Stay thou near by;
Temptations lose their power
When thou art nigh.

That is literally true. When in honest humility I confess my need and depend upon Christ, his living presence is at hand to see me through. Why attempt to go it alone when there is One who said, "I am with you alway, even unto the end . . . "—and who in countless lives has proved that he meant what he said?

POWER IS GIVEN

When David Livingstone returned from years of indescribable sufferings in darkest Africa he spoke before an audience at the University of Glasgow. Out of his own all too real experience he gave this testimony: "I return without misgiving and with great gladness. Would you like for me to tell you what supported me through all the years of exile among people whose language I could not understand and whose attitude was always uncertain and often hostile? It was this: 'Lo, I am with you alway.' On these words I staked everything, and they never failed." At another time Livingstone wrote in his diary: "Felt much turmoil of spirit in view of having all my plans for the welfare of this great region knocked in the head by savages tomor-

row. But Jesus came and said, 'All power is given to me in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore and teach all nations . . . and lo! I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world!' It is the word of a gentleman of the most sacred and strictest honor, and there is an end on't."

I choose Christ because I cannot triumph in my own power. His reinforcement brings victory.

Third, I choose Christ because I have life on my hands, and he is the Master of life. A dozen questions thrust themselves upon every thinking person: Why was I born? Where did I come from? Why am I here? Where am I going? What is life all about? These insistent questions have driven people mad. They are driving men and women distracted every day. These endless cycles we call life; these impenetrable mysteries—why? why? why?

Christ uncrooks the question mark and makes of it an exclamation point. He changes life from a mournful query to an exultant declaration of faith and intention. Do I mean that these questions are all answered by him? I do not. The tensions they create are resolved in him. The purpose of religion is not to solve all the perplexing puzzles. I am but little nearer to straightening out the maze of life's mysteries than is one who never heard of Christ. I mean that the question *why* no longer taunts and maddens me. Then I have retreated? I have closed my mind? None of that. I have found in Christ a kind of life which is satisfying in spite of the unanswered questions. Indeed, it is so satisfying and keeps me so busy that the queries scarcely have standing room.

CHRIST TRIUMPHS OVER ALL

Jesus asked *why,* too; but he did not build his house of life upon an interrogation point. He lived triumphantly even over suffering and death. It was a quality of living that defied mystery and puzzle and somehow had self-evidencing value. So true is this that his life is the one of all history that has stood the test of time. Research and criticism have beat about him as the ocean's tides and billows beat upon a rock, and like Gibraltar he stands. A thousand criticisms are voiced about the church and Christians, but I hear only appreciation of Jesus. In him is a living paradox—he solved life's mysteries by living above them; yet there is no suggestion of retreat in him, only triumph.

Can a sculptor ignore Michelangelo? Can a painter refuse to deal with Leonardo da Vinci? Can a writer pass lightly over Shakespeare? Can a poet fail to confront Browning? Mine are the raw materials of life itself. I must answer to him who above all who ever existed knew how to live.

Fourth, I choose Christ not only because I have a life to live, but because I have a life to give. In other words, I must not only *be* something, I must *do* something. Quality of character is one of my concerns with the one little life I have, but quantity of production is another concern. Something must happen *in* me; but something must happen *through* me. Who does not want his personality to count for something worthwhile between the cradle and the grave? I am not talking here about greatness. Most of us recognize very early that we are not going to be great as the world counts greatness. Those who achieve greatness or have it thrust upon them are few in number. I am talking about making life significant, and thousands of ordinary Christian people do make life significant every day.

I choose Christ because he can take my life and fit it into a purpose which is worldwide in scope and eternal in duration.

I am thrilled whenever I let my imagination play for a bit upon the work which Christian people are trying to get done in the world. It would require a volume simply to list the Christian agencies which are set to bless our needy world in Christ's name—feeding the hungry, caring for the sick, building bridges of good will between enemies, molding Christian character, teaching boys and girls, lifting the "down-and-out," and bearing the gospel of Christ to the far ends of the earth. There is no more significant thing being carried forward than the program of Christ and his people throughout the world. I choose Christ because he gives me a part in that program. The little organism that is *I* then becomes a living part of his great body at work in the world.

CHRIST OR CHAOS

Often I think of that day when Jesus, watching many turn away because they could not "take it," asked his disciples, "Will ye also go away?" You remember their reply: "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life." They knew it was Christ or despair. I know it is Christ or chaos. What other demand upon my life can compete with him?

The great Methodist bishop, William Fraser McDowell, after years of experience in Christ, said this to a congregation of young people:

"If I knew a better person than Jesus Christ I would give him my full, perfect and lifelong allegiance. Not knowing any better person than Jesus Christ I give my allegiance, my love, my obedience, my faith to him.

"If, in all the domain of biography, if in all the wide range of human history, there were a better person, or if any had appeared that seemed worthier to follow, I would follow him.

"If I knew a better ideal of personal life, and a better means of reaching that ideal than the Christian ideal, the ideal of Jesus, I would make that ideal my own.

"If I knew a better program in the world than the program of Jesus for the world, I would give my life to it.

"I cannot get my heart's consent either for myself or for you to follow any second-rate person. I can only satisfy my own sense of what is best and highest and most ideal by following the best Person there is."

I heard him call,
"Come, follow," that was all;
My gold grew dim,
My soul went after him.
I rose and followed, that was all.
Who would not follow if he heard his call?

I Must

By GEORGE HUMPHRIES TOLLEY

Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things that I say? Luke 6:46.

THE ferry from our island in the St. Lawrence was docking at Kingston when I heard a ten year old girl with a decidedly British accent say, "Mother may I have the responsibility of carrying the market basket?" Her use of the word responsibility was so quaint and so unusual as to leave a lasting impression on my mind. Equally impressive was an invitation to talk to some college students on the responsibilities of a Christian. I have been asked hundreds of times what the church will do for people, what a strong faith will accomplish for a person, but very rarely have I heard any one ask, "What can I do for the church?" or "What must I do because I am a Christian?"

It seems fairly obvious to me that the first responsibility of a Christian is to establish a certain conviction about Jesus Christ. Yet, obvious as this seems to me, it apparently does not seem important at all to hosts of people. For they are saying—yes and living—the conviction that one religion is as good as another; all of the world's great faiths are aiming at the same goal; they differ only in the roads they take.

IS THE GOLDEN RULE ENOUGH?

These people begin to insist that the common element of most faiths, the religion of the Golden Rule, is good enough for them; if only everyone lived according to the Golden Rule, the millennium would be here. But, unfortunately for them, the Golden Rule is not a religion; it is only a moral maxim or an ethical code. And an ethical code is only as good as its authority. The Golden Rule divorced from Christianity is altogether human and only as good as the individual who speaks it; and that isn't very good. It needs Christ and the whole high religion of Jesus to give it persistence and power.

So I must insist that the Christian's first responsibility is to establish a certain conviction about Jesus Christ. This is what Paul tried to tell his jailer who asked what he must do to be saved: "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ."

But what is it to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ? One man seems to say that it is being born again through a terrific emotional release which makes him know that a total transformation has taken place within him. Another man is equally sure that believing is the quiet blossoming into happy consciousness of seeds of conviction long nurtured in the heart. The debate between these two schools has now raged long enough for us to realize that either experience can be a valid conversion; but that neither really touches the essential point. These are the external evidences of belief; the belief itself lives in another realm.

The belief is a deep and abiding and unwavering conviction that Jesus fills a distinctive and altogether unique place in our human history. This is what Christians ought to mean when they refer to Jesus as the Christ, the Messiah, the Annointed One, the Son of God. Unfortunately, these terms have become so dusted over with familiarity and sanctity as to have almost lost all meaning. Dr. Fosdick puts it well when he writes: "The gist of what the church has meant by the divinity of Jesus lies in the idea that, if God is to be symbolized by personal life, he should be symbolized by the best personal life we know. The interpretation of the spiritual world in terms of personality and the interpretation of personality in terms of Christ—that is in brief the summary of Christian theology."

For me, it has been most helpful to think of Jesus as the earthly symbol of God.

AN INDIVIDUAL EXPERIENCE

The second responsibility of the Christian is to develop a continuing and continuous sense of personal rapport with this symbol of God. For if Christianity has anything at all to say, it is that Jesus Christ is still very much alive and that his spirit is always and everywhere available to those who believe.

Frankly it is not easy for all people to achieve this sense of the nearness of Christ. Because it does not come easily, hosts of Christians have never experienced it. What's more, the church cannot quite tell a person how to win it. The church knows that regular personal devotions, Bible reading, meditation, prayer and regular corporate worship in a church sanctuary will predispose a person to the experience; but in the final analysis, the individual must create the experience for himself. Sincerity, concentration, intelligence and other purely personal attributes must be added to prayer, Bible reading and common worship if these are to produce that sense of the presence of Jesus Christ.

Mind you, it is not a trance state which is desired; not necessarily a mystic experience either; it is the down to earth kind of thing that happened to Moses. "The Eternal would speak to Moses face to face as a man speaks to his friend." A Christian will win for himself this personal and intimate contact with the living spirit of his Lord.

The third responsibility of the Christian is to promulgate his faith. And again we are touching a matter which has but little importance for the average Christian. It is enough for him that he attends service fairly often on Sunday and keeps his pledge paid up. The promulgation of the faith is the preacher's job—or the missionary's. As I see it, it is just as well that such

people do not try to promulgate the faith, for I fear the faith they would talk about would be a hopelessly watered-down one.

The larger fact is that the world needs to know about the faith of the Christian, and needs to hear about it from the lips of the non-professional, so to speak. And it will; for the Christian who has the conviction that Jesus is the earthly symbol of God, who has found an intimate and personal contact with the living spirit of Christ, will also have an enthusiasm for his finding which will have its expression.

A LIFE WORTH LOOKING AT

Oliver Wendell Holmes insisted that "it is faith in something and enthusiasm about something which make a life worth looking at." Sometime take a look at the Christian who isn't afraid to discuss his faith and conviction with friends, neighbors and acquaintances, and see how right Dr. Holmes was.

Jesus entrusted the preaching of his gospel to his disciples and the seventy; all of them laymen as we would say today; none of them particularly outstanding in anything but faith and enthusiasm. Today he is entrusting it to us—to those of us who are convinced so that we dare not keep quiet about the tremendous wisdom entrusted to us.

The fourth responsibility I would mention is the one you expected to come first—and perhaps to be my entire list. It is the moral responsibility of the Christian. There is no denying the fact that the test of the sincerity and depth of faith and conviction is the quality of the actions generated by the faith and conviction. The teachings of Jesus most assuredly include an ethic —a lofty and unique one. That Jesus expects the Christian to live the ethic is clearly indicated in that stinging rebuke "Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things I say?"

HUMAN WORTH AND RECONCILIATION

That ethic revolves around two pivots, as I see it. The first is the inestimable worth of every human being. This means to me that the Christian has a responsibility to make his own life and that of his social milieu such that the best possibilities in every life will have a good opportunity for their best expression. So, the Christian, in addition to living on a plane of high personal morality, will combat those social evils which cramp, restrict, and frustrate the children of God. Slavery, personal and economic, segregation, intolerance, unjust distribution of the profits of industry, war, must surely be part of a catalogue of such evils. They must be fought to the end that man shall be free, or, as Christ himself put it, "I am come that they may have life and may have it more abundantly."

The second pivot around which the Christian ethic revolves is reconciliation. The God of Jesus Christ is a forgiving Father. When Peter asked how many times a trespasser should be forgiven, he was given the astounding answer—"Until there is no longer anything to forgive."

All of the Christian's efforts to change his world for

BACK HOME AGAIN!

—thanks to MINISTERS LIFE and CASUALTY UNION

"We missed you and worried about you all through the time of your illness! How glad we are that my MINISTERS LIFE and CASUALTY UNION policy has family hospitalization. We thank God that money is available when needed for hospital expenses."

If you are a full time religious worker, you, too, may have hospitalization for your family in the MINISTERS LIFE and CASUALTY UNION.

In addition we issue low-cost insurance policies to provide life income and protection to the family. Also Health and Accident Insurance at a saving up to 40%—with or without family hospitalization. Issuing low-cost insurance for nearly 50 years. Write for complete details.

THE MINISTERS LIFE AND CASUALTY UNION
Legal Reserve Life Insurance
1002 West Franklin Avenue
Minneapolis, Minn.

Gentlemen: Without obligation on my part, tell me how I can ( ) Protect my family ( ) Build a Retirement Fund ( ) Pay for sickness, accident and hospitalization.

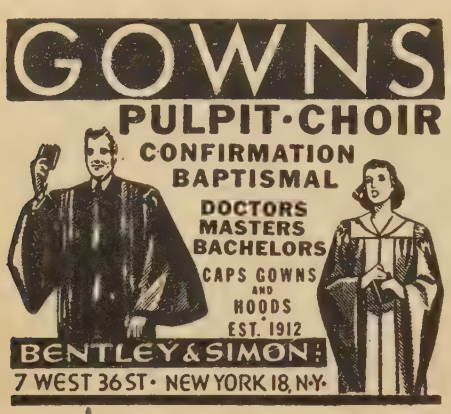
Name .....

Address .....

City .....

Date of Birth .....

Denomination .....



MAKE YOUR LENTEN PREACHING POWERFUL

with

Good Illustrations -:- Apt Quotations
Appropriate Poetry

on such topics as

Christ **Evangelism** **God**
Conversion **Faith** **Palm Sunday**
Easter **Forgiveness** **Peace**

just a few of the topics found in

Packets One and Two (100 4x6 entries each) now available
$1.00 per packet or $4.50 for first five issues

THE MINISTER'S FILE SERVICE
3435 W. Van Buren St. Chicago 24, Ill.

The pulpit committee judges the preacher
BY HIS PREACHING

PULPIT PREACHING is a sermon help of unparalleled value. In its 2nd year, over 4,000 leading ministers approve it. Send only $1 for 3 months' trial. $4 per year.

PULPIT PREACHING
458 Ponce de Leon Ave., N.E. Atlanta, Georgia

Choir and Pulpit **ROBES**

Large selection of fine materials, reasonably priced. Write for catalogue C-62 (choir robes); J-62 (junior choir); P-62 (pulpit robes).

COLLEGIATE CAP & GOWN CO.
CHICAGO 117 N. Wacker · CHAMPAIGN, ILL. 1000 N. Market · NEW YORK 366 Fifth Ave.

the better must be attempted in the spirit of reconciliation. It is not enough to make men good; they must be made brothers as well.

These then are the primary responsibilities of the Christian—to possess conviction and a personal contact, to speak and live the conviction and the contact that all men everywhere shall see and be influenced by the spirit of Christ reflected in us. Perhaps one further word on this obligation of ours would be helpful. We are not responsible for the success of our effort; but we are responsible for its sincerity.

VERSE

A Communion Prayer

By Ethel Baumann Rose

With reverence and with great awe, help me
To approach the Holy Supper. To be
Blessed as I commune with Thee is what I
Ask this special day. Grateful for the high
Privilege of communion with Thee, may
I come to Thy table always, and stay
In a spirit of true repentance and
More in harmony with Thy will. Thy hand
Leading me, dear Lord, I ask. Help me to
Be governed by love. May I have a due
Respect for myself and a regard for
The opinions of others. Make me more
And more Christ-like as I live every day,
And make my heart big to follow Thy way.

My Child Asked a Stone!

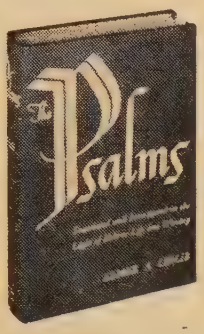
By Mary Dickerson Bangham

My child asked a stone. I gave him one.
Another stone he asked. Again, I gave.
I gave and gave until he had enough
To build a wall!

With sight too long delayed, I saw that waste,
That useless stone! . . . . Together, we began
To build an altar, make a fire, place
Thereon our bread . . . .

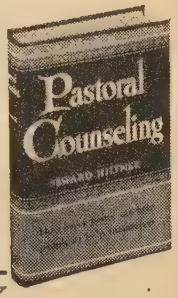
We watched it slowly brown. The loaf was small.
And yet it fed a starving passer-by
And there was ample left! Our weary selves
Were satisfied!

My child asked for stones, not bread. But God
In understanding love and mercy gave
Us work to do . . . . Then, through repentant tears,
We saw our humble offering change, return
As *Living Bread!*



New Books

from Abingdon-Cokesbury



THE BIBLE

The Psalms *Translated and Interpreted in the Light of Hebrew Life and Worship*

By Elmer A. Leslie. Here is a fresh *translation*, a revealing *commentary*, and a significant *interpretation* —valuable help in understanding the Psalms in relation to their use and function in Israel and the psalm literature of the ancient East, and in applying their meaning to the issues of life today. **$5**

The English New Testament

From Tyndale to the Revised Standard Version

By Luther A. Weigle. The chairman of the American Standard Bible Commission tells the story of the English New Testament: how it came into being and how it has been revised from time to time. A book of lasting significance to all who believe in the abiding value of the English New Testament in preaching, teaching, and studying God's Word. **$2**

Lincoln and The Bible

By Clarence E. Macartney. Letting the records speak for themselves, Dr. Macartney offers a revealing study that "brings to life" Lincoln's knowledge and use of the Bible, his reverence for its teachings, and his deep spirituality. A book of many values, and a rich source of material for sermons, lectures, and addresses. **$1.25**

THE PREACHING MINISTRY

Bearing Witness to the Truth

The Lyman Beecher "Yale" Lectures

By Harold Cooke Phillips. A pointed, practical, stimulating discussion of preaching as an essential means of "bearing witness to the truth"—the nature of truth and how it can be known; the sermon as a medium for expressing it; the preacher as a worthy witness; and Christ as "the embodiment of the truth." **$2.50**

THEOLOGY

The Meaning of Christ for Paul

By Elias Andrews. A significant analysis of Christ in the thought and experience of his greatest interpreter. "Although it deals primarily with Paul's understanding of Christ, it really amounts to a very useful account of Paul's whole theological position. An excellent piece of work."—*Dr. John Knox,* Union Theological Seminary. **$3**

The PASTORAL MINISTRY

Pastoral Counseling

By Seward Hiltner. A workable answer to every pastor's question—"How can I improve my pastoral counseling?"

Pastoral counseling, according to the author, is a process of helping people to help themselves by guiding and aiding them to think through their own problems. In this sound book on methods, Dr. Hiltner has combined his own wide study and experience with the best findings of pastors, counselors, and psychologists. His liberal use of interview material clearly illustrates the principles discussed and makes the book unusually interesting—a skillful blending of theory and practice that has been proved in human situations. **$3**

To Fulfill This Ministry

By William C. Martin. Writing out of his own fruitful experience, both as a pastor and as a pastor of pastors, Bishop Martin delivers this warmhearted and contagiously enthusiastic message to pastors to help them fulfill their ministry with skill and confidence.

With rare insight and practical wisdom he discusses all phases of the minister's pastoral work, and offers down-to-earth counsel on how a preacher can maintain the glow of high-heartedness and enthusiasm for his work to the closing day of his ministry. **$1.75**

ACCENT . . . EVANGELISM

Toward the Great Awakening

By Sidney W. Powell. The pastor of Tremont Temple, Boston, believes the time is fast approaching for a widespread religious revival. Here he deals with evangelism in all its various aspects—in preaching, in personal life, in the home, and in work with children—and shows what an effective force evangelism can be in bringing about another "Great Awakening." Clearly and constructively, he calls upon all Christians—ministers and laymen alike—to take their part in the coming revival. **$2**

Let Me Commend

By W. E. Sangster. How evangelism can be made effective on the platform, in teamwork and in personal witness—and how its results can be conserved.

". . . by one of the greatest preachers of England; a forthright, pungent, thrilling study of the motive, message and method of evangelism in our day; far and away the best book in this field for years."—*Dr. Joseph Fort Newton.* **$1.75**

At your bookstore . . . ABINGDON-COKESBURY

The Minister and Poetry

By THOMAS CURTIS CLARK

THE best thing about religion, said the late Dr. S. Parkes Cadman, is its poetry. He probably did not refer to rhymed verse, as we think of poetry, but to the poetic, imaginative point of view which must be brought to an interpretation of religion. Too often religion has been approached with a hard, factual, legalistic mind—and religion has often eluded such an approach. As one reads the Bible, one is aware that its great truth cannot be found through a use of the instruments of science and logic alone. While Beecher, Brooks and Bushnell were excellent in argument, they were at the same time marvelously skilful in their appeal to the imagination and to the heart.

● *The Best Thing About Religion*

This is not to say that a minister may not be notably successful in his chosen work and yet have no rating as a poetry scholar. It is to say that a minister who does not often commune with the poetic seers of the past and present, misses something of great value to his life and to his ministry. My minister-father achieved success in pastorates extending over forty-five years, but I think he might have found an inspiration he never had through those years of ministry if he had been better acquainted with the master poets. I think I can say that in all the years of his preaching, so far as I knew them, he did not make a dozen quotations from the poets and singers. His sermons were marked by logic, and they had much appeal to the hearts and lives of his congregation. But he could have illuminated them if he had gone to Shakespeare, Milton, Wordsworth more often. It was late in life before he did find an interest in poetry. Then he even wrote a number of poems of his own which found wide publication.

● *Use Poetry Naturally*

This article is not being written to suggest that ministers should purchase a half-dozen anthologies and set about inserting in their sermons some good poems where they happen to fit. That simply does not work. In an effective sermon, if poems are used, they have found their way there naturally. They are needed as an aid in presenting the truth which is to be given by the minister to his audience. Dr. Fosdick does not often quote poetry, but when he does the verse is no interloper amid his logic; it belongs there and it does its part in setting forth the truth the speaker wishes to present. Dr. Luccock, too, is economical in his quotations from the poets, but when he stops to use a bit of pungent verse—usually from very modern poets—he makes a stab at the very heart of his audience. Almost cruelly he twists those few lines around in the wound he has made—and he gets results!

But, as I said above, the purpose of this article is not to set ministers to grabbing the anthologies in a search for "quotable poems." Here is the point to be made: In times like these, when everything seems to be "in flux," when the very foundations seem to be falling away as our "new world" is built; in times like these, those who are set to bring comfort and courage to the millions, need to support their own faith with the assurances of

T. C. CLARK

the greater poets and seers. A few years ago, in a conversation with a minister who had for many years ministered in the heart of New York city, we got to talking about poetry, and we were agreeing that Wordsworth had much to give spiritual leaders today. "I simply could not live without him," this minister remarked of the "Poet of the Lakes." Without doubt many hundreds of ministers find this great poet—second only to Shakespeare among English poets who according to some critics is the most helpful to their lives and ministries in these difficult days.

● *Poetry an Aid To Statesmen*

Not only ministers, but also statesmen—who too must guide multitudes through stormy seas—have found support in the poems of Wordsworth. In the poet's own time, he often brought courage and hope to his people. At the time when Napoleon had won his great victories and assuming the dictatorship was threatening invasion of England, Wordsworth was stirred as never before and wrote a number of poems "with many a fear for my dear country" which brought relief to his countrymen. Those very poems, incidentally, were sources of comfort to certain British statesmen during the First World War, and stories have been told of how Sir Edward Grey would wind up conferences over important strategic war problems with conversations about the poetry of Wordsworth, which he greatly liked.

● *Foundations For Living*

Perhaps the greatest service rendered by this English poet to those of today who must wrestle with the problems of a world in tumult is his power to bring us back again to take lessons in the classes which Nature, the great teacher, still conducts for those who will attend. One who has visited the Wordsworth country, and has imbibed the spirit of those sturdy mountains, Helvellyn and Skiddaw, and those silver lakes, Derwentwater, Windermere and others, would expect to find in the works of the poet who dwelt among them much to give one "foundations for living." And Wordsworth does that. And other poets perform much the same service. Here is Wordsworth's eulogy on Nature, which (or rather Who) was his very life and thought:

> . . . . This prayer I make,
> Knowing that Nature never did betray
> The heart that loved her; 'tis her privilege,
> Through all the years of this our life, to lead
> From joy to joy: for she can so inform
> The mind that is within us, so impress
> With quietness and beauty, and so feed
> With lofty thoughts, that neither evil tongues,
> Rash judgments, nor the sneers of selfish men,
> Nor greetings where no kindness is, nor all
> The dreary intercourse of daily life,
> Shall e'er prevail against us, or disturb
> Our cheerful faith, that all which we behold
> Is full of blessings. . . .

It is no wonder that the minister in New York city, "where cross the crowded ways of life," found balm for his spirit in the poetry of Wordsworth, the poet of mountains and lakes!

But there are many other poets of earlier days who have much to offer those who must listen to the confused noises that go with a world being made

over, and who need to be fortified by the great souls who in some fashion found sturdy foundations for living. Wordsworth has been chosen for special attention because, according to the best information, he seems to have been coming back into a favorite position during the war years. He is reported to have found special favor in the colleges and universities.

● *The Modern Poets*

And what about more modern poets? Dr. Halford Luccock, in his book of several years ago, *Contemporary American Literature and Religion,* and also in his recent work, *The Questing Spirit,* points out how important it is for anyone who would minister to today's needs to make the acquaintance of the creative spirits among the poets who are doing so much to mold our ideas and our civilization. Benjamin Franklin confidently declared that "poetry is the waste paper of mankind," but Dr. Luccock does not agree with him. The fact that he gives two hundred pages of his new book to the poets indicates his feeling as to their importance. And there has been during the past half-century a heavy tide of good poetry—rivaling that of any preceding century, according to Oscar Williams, compiler of *A Little Treasury of Modern Poetry.* Not to know at least something of this accumulated wealth would be tragic indeed for those who are called to lead the multitudes and to serve as advance agents for the new world now being born.

There is Edwin Markham, who started this century off very well with his resounding and disturbing "The Man With a Hoe." In that poem are heard the early mutterings of labor which have now grown into a veritable world blast. And there is Masefield, who, although he has been largely silent since he became poet-laureate, yet in his earlier years added much to the world's poetic wealth. Had he never written any other poem than his "A Consecration," he would deserve the laureauteship; that poem which champions so devotedly "the maimed, the halt, and the blind in the rain and the cold."

Carl Sandburg the poet has been lost among his accumulating reams of Lincolniana, but he is still a poet—even in his recently published novel. And his poems gathered into his volumes *Chicago and Other Poems, Cornhuskers* and *Smoke and Steel* are worthy of careful reading to one who would know this twentieth century. Edna St. Vincent Millay has long been silent, but to give time to her poems of twenty-five years ago might be a better investment of one's hours than wasting them with this year's output of morbid fiction.

And surely Vachel Lindsay has something to offer ambitious seekers. One sees his name very seldom today, but he cut a wide swath in our literature two or more decades ago. He must still be given the tribute often appended to his name during his lifetime—"the most American of American poets." For he was that. And he was essentially a religious poet. Brought up in the church, he first won fame with a religious poem, "General William Booth Enters Into Heaven." He was continually telling his readers that "Except the Christ be born again tonight in dreams of all men, saints and sons of shame, the world will never see his kingdom bright." One of his greatest poems, "The Congo," is a resounding argument for Christian missions, and his poem "Foreign Missions in Battle Array" closes with a stirring declaration of his faith:

> This is our faith tremendous,—
> Our wild hope, who shall scorn,—
> That in the name of Jesus
> The world shall be reborn!

It is true that the poets do not preface their utterances with a "Thus saith the Lord" as do the prophets; but for all that they have their place in life, a most important place. Many of us are called to live down where the fogs and mists are, and it is good that we have the singers and seers to tune us in on the higher regions of idealism, where the air is purer and the music is more inspiring.

Dr. Luccock closes the preface to his book *The Questing Spirit* with a quotation by an author whom he does not name: "The whole universe crumbles without God." It has been the task of the greater poets to show that to be true, and also to stress for us who walk often in confusion "the high instincts of the heart,"

> Which, be they what they may,
> Are yet the fountain-light of all our day,
> Are yet a master-light of all our seeing.

Sermon Illustrations

Contributed by Readers of The Pulpit

My Cup Runneth Over

PICTURE your life as a cup with just so much room in it and no more. If you fill the cup with concern for physical things there will be no room for spiritual growth and the higher good will be crowded out. You will actually be impoverishing yourself spiritually while you are getting ahead materially—just as did the Rich Fool in Jesus' parable. For "a man's life consists not of the things he possesses." But if we seek the kingdom first, then we can have the spiritual good. I wonder if David may not have meant that when he said, "My cup runneth over." This is the better part Jesus bade us choose.—*Donald Douds, Miami Shores Community Church, Miami, Fla.*

The Perfect Sermon

St. Francis of Assissi once stepped down into the cloisters of his monastery and said to a young monk: "Brother, let us go into the town and preach." So they went forth, the venerable father and the young man. They conversed as they went and finally found themselves at the monastery again. "But father," the young man asked, "when shall we begin to preach?" "My son, we have been preaching," St. Francis replied; "we were preaching while we were walking. We have been seen and looked at; our behaviour has been remarked upon; we have delivered a morning sermon. You see, my son, it is of no use that we walk anywhere to preach unless we preach as we walk."—*Rudy H. Thomas, Central Community Church, Columbus, Ohio.*

Damaging Evidence

When Theodore Roosevelt was a candidate for office, a newspaper, having come out in opposition, was determined to defeat him. They sent a photographer to be an almost constant companion to Mr. Roosevelt in an effort to get some damaging evidence. Some time later the paper ran a picture of the candidate showing his face distorted with anger. Afterward the president asked the photographer how long it had taken to secure the picture. The newspaper man replied: "Seven weeks." Yet there were thousands of people who judged Mr. Roosevelt by the way he looked for just one second out of seven weeks!—*Robert Perry Bartlett, First Baptist Church of Brattleboro, Vermont.*

The Road Is Marked

This summer I drove on route forty from Estes Park, Colorado, to Salt Lake City, Utah, across the great divide of the Rocky mountains. As I drove, all I had to do was follow the route signs. The way had been laid out and the road made smooth. But there was a time when there was a

real question as to what was the best and shortest way between those same points. It was not until a party of pioneers had explored the mountains and surveyed the passes that the best route was established. That is what Jesus did for us in the life he lived. He did not create the route but he revealed it. He pioneered the way so that, ever after, those who followed it could follow him.—*Frederick A. Meyer, The Congregational Church of Rockville Center, New York.*

Her True Self

There is a haunting story of Frau Lindemann whose family was massacred by the Indians during Colonial days. Only a six year old daughter survived but as a captive of the Indians. Ten years passed in captivity and the girl forgot all but the slightest glimmer of white civilization. She took on the language, customs, attitude and mind of the savages. Then came the day when the captives were returned from the Indian settlements. The old German mother, who had never ceased to hope for reunion with her child scanned the faces of the group to recognize her daughter, grown now to be more an Indian than a White. There was one group of sullen, blond-haired, blue-eyed savages who had seemingly forgotten all of the better life to which they had been born. Frau Lindemann, her eyes dimmed by tears, wondered how she would find her child. Finally, her voice quavering with emotion, she began to sing an old German hymn which she had used as a lullaby. As she sang, one sullen girl rent the air with her scream and ran to her mother crying: "O mutter, mutter!" The music of love had reached her true self and turned her back from a savage into the dutiful daughter of the aged German mother.—*Ensworth Reisner, First Methodist Church, Milwaukee, Wis.*

Not Enough Time

One reason for the breakdown of home life lies in the fact that so many families have by-passed religion. They have crowded it out with the result that the average Protestant church school child receives about thirty or forty hour's religious instruction a year—as much as they get a week in the public school; and one half of the children in this nation do not receive any religious training at all. In a country professedly Christian, we are allowing the citizens of the future to be brought up in a purely heathen environment. I can still feel the shock which came to me a couple of years ago when on a pastoral call I asked a mother why her child no longer attended church school. Her answer was: "You don't seem to realize how busy children are these days! My daughter just had to give up something."—*Harold Roy Brennan, St. Mark's Methodist Church, Rockville Center, N. Y.*

The Mystic Union

A dear old saint whom I knew in former years bore the name of Peter. Every one called him Pete. One day, talking with me, he said, "If God should take me to the very mouth of hell and say to me, 'In you go, Pete; here's where you belong,' I should say to Him, 'That is true, Lord. I do belong here. But if you make me go to hell your dear Son Jesus Christ must go with me. He and I are one and you cannot separate us any more.'" This is what is called in theology by the not very clear title "the mystic union." It is of first importance, both to the atonement and to the new moral life of the Christian.—*Albertus Pieters, in* Divine Lord and Saviour (*Revell*).

He Could Not Answer

In a scientific age, perhaps it is natural for belief in miracles to be difficult. Once I was talking with a famous biologist, who was boasting with great intellectual pride that he would believe nothing he could not explain. I asked him if he was convinced that life on the earth must have an origin. Candor compelled him to admit that it must have had. I asked him to explain that origin to me. I am still awaiting his answer. From such an incident we learn how superficial and vain it is to deny what we cannot prove. Life teaches us that all about us are genuine mysteries for which our finite minds can find no solution.—*Archibald Rutledge, in* The Angel Standing (*Revell*).

Our Great Contemporary

Jesus Christ can become your contemporary, your risen, living Lord known to you in intimate friendship, the strength and joy and hope of every day. That he has been to countless thousands down through the ages. This he was to the Apostle Paul. This he was to Francis of Assisi. This he was to Raymond Lull and Robert Morrison and Adoniram Judson. This he was to Robert William Dale of Carr's Lane, London, who had an Easter Hymn sung in his church every Sunday with the hope that his church might come to believe that Jesus Christ is really alive. This he was to Winifred Kirkland, who declared him to be "the most living fact of the present." This he is to me also—the Jesus of history, and yet more real to me than any human being I know.—*Jesse R. Wilson in* Whose Disciples (Revell).

How to "Come Through"

Dr. George A. Buttrick was once asked by a student who had heard him successively for quite a few Sundays, how he managed to "come through" so gloriously and successfully every time. Dr. Buttrick told him: "I see nobody until Thursday because I am preparing the sermon. On Thursday I see anybody. Then on Saturday I see no one for I am preparing the man."—*Contributed by William J. Simmons, Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church, Roanoke, Va.*

The Church of Christ

A few years ago when the churches of Christ in Japan were forced to combine, due to the emergencies of the war, considerable discussion was had regarding a name. One group wanted to call the united church, The Church of Christ of Japan. However, this name was not acceptable to a large portion of the leadership because, said they: "The church is not *of* Japan. It is *in* Japan but it is *of* God." This voice won out and the name adopted by the Christians in that land was The Church of Christ in Japan.—*Richard L. James, Oak Cliff Christian Church, Dallas, Texas.*

Sermons in Brief

Edward C. Dahl of Centre Congregational Church, Brattleboro, Vt., has a sermon entitled "On Using the Religion You Have." The text is Matthew 25:29. The trouble with the world is not so much that we need more religion but that "we have never gotten around to using the religion we now have!" If we use our religion it will increase and give us a more adequate and joyous faith. Points are: 1. We believe in the Christian way of life but never really get around to trying it. 2. We believe in a Christian world order but we never get around to sacrificing very much to help it come into being. 3. We believe in the power of prayer but never get around to praying earnestly and consistently. 4. We believe that the Gospel of Christ has an answer to any man's personal need but we never get around to sharing our faith with others.

"The Kingship of Christ," by Alan Walker, Methodist minister of Waverly, Australia, is inspired by a sense of the Kingship of Christ the author carried with him from Amsterdam last summer. His text is Matt. 28:18, and his points are: 1. The king of the church. 2. The king of the world. 3. The king of our hearts. He concludes with these words: "There come hours of suffering, of weakness, of bereavement, of death, when every prompting of faith seems denied." But such claims are lies. "Christ has won his victory once and for all. Christ reigns. And his victory is our victory . . . and he shall reign for ever and ever." G.H.B.

Thoughts from Unpublished Sermons

FROM ALVIN D. JOHNSON of Middletown, Conn., comes a unique sermon entitled "The Wondrous Cross of Christ." This manuscript comes at the crucial Lenten theme in a manner which differs from the conventional approach by its use of a fresh terminology and modern symbols. The author begins with a brief reference to the seven wonders of the ancient world which leads him to assert that the modern world can boast far more wonders of even greater significance than these. At the head of the list he would place the atomic bomb. But the cross of Christ, and at this point he launches into his theme, is the greatest wonder of them all.

The Wondrous Cross

"In three brief hours," he writes, "it began a *spiritual* chain reaction which continues to influence individuals and nations over nineteen hundred years. . . . Kagawa in the slums of Japan, Schweitzer . . . toiling in Africa, E. Stanley Jones, Christian statesman of India and America, T. Z. Koo of China, John R. Mott, these are only a few of the thousands who inject a Christian life plasma into a sick society."

He then turns to consider the elements in this greatest of all events which he calls "operations redemption." "First, there was a man, a humble Jew from a backwash community of Palestine. . . . Second, there is an angry crowd of 'good' people—goaded on by the Pharisees . . . a small group of Roman officials intent on doing their distasteful job as soldiers . . . (and) still another group, absent, dejected, humiliated, disillusioned. . . ." Finally, "there is a rough-hewn cross carried by the humble Jew. . . ."

The "zero hour" approaches. "The Jew is thrown down on the horizontal cross on the ground. His hands and feet are spiked to the cross; the cross is raised and dropped with a thud into the waiting posthole. . . . A Jew, a crowd, a cross, death. It is finished."

Then starts the "chain reaction." From these elements "God made the greatest wonder the world has ever known or will ever know. . . . This is the structure of 'operations redemption.' . . . The chain-reaction had begun. Kingdoms and governments overthrown; whole societies brought to repentance . . . churches, hospitals and schools established; the gospel preached to the whole world."

"This powerful force released upon the world reaches over time and into the hearts of his followers . . . it gets down to the grass roots . . . they forgive when insulted, they seek out service, they accept the unrewarding tasks of the world; they love the derelict, the bum, the thief, the murderer, the adulterer, the bewildered, the insane, the shallow, the wounded, the repulsive. They teach; they preach, they give. They pray; they lose themselves . . . and the greatest wonder of the world today—they find themselves now and forever."

"The wondrous cross of Christ, the greatest wonder of the world, began a spiritual chain reaction—have you felt its power?"

A Reason Given

"The Last of Life for Which the First Was Made," is a sermon by JOSEPH S. JOHNSTON of the Epworth Methodist Church, Norfolk, Va. This sermon takes as its text a passage from Hebrews, chapter twelve, verses three to eight and eleven. As one readily sees from the passage quoted, the thought deals with the discipline the Christian must undergo and the purpose behind it.

To begin with, says this preacher, "our interest in the faraway home of the soul is not to be construed as a denial of interest in our present habitation. . . . In fact, we are so much interested in this present life, we feel the compulsion to seek its redemption from sin and commonplaceness."

"But we do not treasure it (life) as an end in itself . . . it is the way by which men are brought to God and to that larger life in him." To show man's status in the present life, he quotes from Studdert Kennedy:

"There's nothing in man that's perfect
and nothing that's all complete.
'E's nubbat a beginning
from 'is 'ead to the soles of 'is feet—
There's summat as draws 'im upwards
and summat as drags 'im down,
And the consekence is 'e wobbles
'Twixt muck and a golden crown."

Man escapes from this situation in this life. "It is here, by God's grace, that our incompleteness is brought to completeness and our imperfection to perfection. . . . We must not assume, however, that the experiences of our days and years will lead us to something sublime, regardless of the way in which we use them. . . . God alone helps us to turn every experience into an enriching one." We must help him accomplish this end in several ways.

First, by a discipline of our minds—"if we feed our minds solely upon the 'acids of modernity,' the pulp magazine, the newspaper, the current weeklies and the cheaper novels . . . we let our thinking run unbridled and death is the end, not life."

Second, if we harden our hearts against all "sentiment and high emotion while feeding them exclusively upon the emotional pablum of the screen, the radio, the playing field or the boxing ring," we miss the spiritual sensitivity God would have us develop toward the needs of others and the pressure of the holy Spirit.

We must not assume that only the pleasant experiences of life are conducive to the enrichment of character. God is able to bring good from every experience—death, betrayal, severe illness—even unrequited love. "It is out of so-called calamity that the moral resistance to life is created.

"You have a cross? He knows what it is. You see no purpose in it? Have you held it up to the light of God's purpose? I like to think that just as the rose is never so sweet as after it has been crushed, so the disciple is never so much like the Master as after he has courageously borne a cross."

"This is the last for which the first was made!"

A Greater Problem

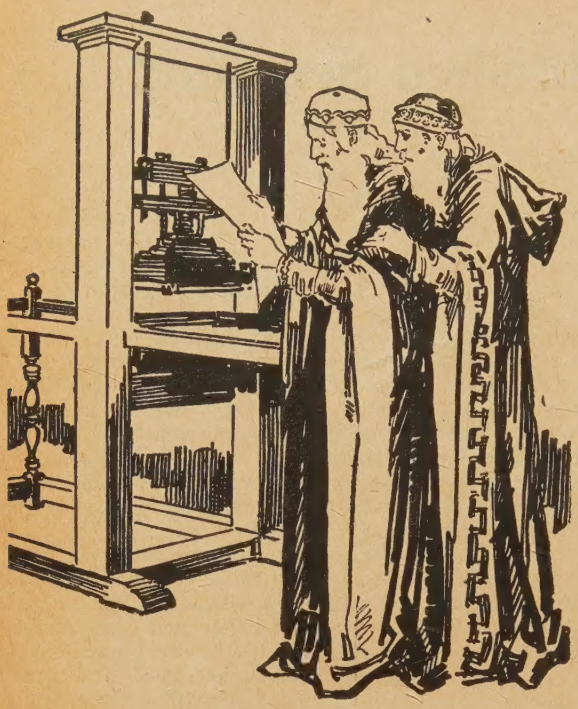
In the Pulpit files there is a sermon by EDWARD J. VORBA of the First Congregational Church of Bradford, Vermont, which is well worth fuller treatment than space permits it to be given here. But the thought it carries, and particularly a reference with which it begins should not be overlooked in this Lenten season. MR. VORBA was in London in November, 1947, where he heard LESLIE WETHERHEAD say these words: "If the world had not gone wrong, it would pose a greater problem for the Christian thinker than it does now—if men could live as they have and nothing happened!"

The preacher comments: "Rather than despair in this century's history, we should take new heart in the ways of God! There is all the more reason to face our day with new assurance and confidence. We can truly give thanks to God that all this has happened!"

Out of the darkest trials of men can be born the greatest light—and in the most decisive defeat can come "our deepest faith, our greatest hope, our biggest task as Christians."

G. H. B.

This column, known previously as "Speaking of Sermons," is designed to bring to the attention of Pulpit readers some of the many fine sermons which lack of space prevents printing in full. They are given here in the form of reviews in the hope that the fine material they contain may serve as inspiration and "thought starters" for our readers.



Magic in the Printed Word

AS IF there were magic in the impress of type, the printed word conjures vital interest. To most folk, "I saw it in print," has stirring significance. As the printed word crystallizes creative thought, so is it a dynamic force in influencing thought—and arousing action.

Let the Printed Word Reinforce Your Efforts

Publicity through printers' ink can work wonders in your church—in your parish—even far afield.

A Church Magazine of Your Own!

Put one to work for you. Let it go to every member of your community. It not only tells the people what your church has done and plans to do, spiritually and socially, but it makes them think, talk, plan and work with you. It extends your influence, the grace and power of your church. It increases attendance and collections. Helpful in your indeavors to enlarge the kingdom of God, it builds a successful pastorship.

A PARISH PAPER INCREASES ATTENDANCE

MAKES PASTORAL CALLS

KEEPS COMMUNITY INFORMED

VISITS THE SICK AND INFIRM

CONQUERS INDIFFERENCE

ENCOURAGES CHURCH WORK

AIDS CHURCH FINANCES

Send the Coupon NOW!

Information as to how you may run a successful magazine for your church at little trouble and cost—even at a profit if you choose—will be sent by return mail, upon receipt of the coupon. The plan is well worth your serious consideration. Send for the particulars. Read every word. Then decide. Don't put it off and let a glorious opportunity slip by.

USE THIS COUPON

The National Religious Press,
Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Name.....

Street.....

City.....

T.P. .....State.....

The National Religious Press

523 Ottawa Ave.

GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN